

# A HOPEWELLIAN MARINE DIPPER

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Rarely does a collector learn of a unique artifact being found close to his home. An anxious thrill rushes over him as he yearns to get a glimpse of the relic, and hear firsthand, the events of the discovery.

And such was the case, when I heard of a shell dipper or "drinking cup" that had been uncovered by a logger in southeastern Illinois. While dragging logs, he fortunately noticed the vessel lying on the side of a hill, just before crushing it with a timber skidder. It happened on a Hopewell site near the mouth of the Wabash River, four miles north of IL. Hwy 141, back in 1999.

The chance discovery took place on an elevated region that rises above the Wabash floodplain, and is known among the locals as Dog Town Hills. Situated on these hills and their eastern flank, is the well-known Wilson Group and Village Site, (#77000491, National Register of Historic Places, added 1977). The site is a Hopewell mortuary and village component of the Middle Woodland Culture, attributed to the "Crab Orchard Tradition" (Caldwell and Hall, 1977). The

Wilson Group (named for Ethel R. Wilson) is a series of intermediate burial mounds, perched on a north to south oriented terrace that parallels the river. The little community of Rising Sun and the two thousand year old Hopewell village site are nestled in between the river and the mounded crest.

To clarify a point, the logger was definitely pulling turns across the face of one of the mounds in the Wilson Group, which, in time, exposed the ancient cup. The artifact was obviously found in the upper mound fill, not with the lower features of the mound structure, i.e. the burial chamber and associated offerings. Records indicate that all twelve of the group's mounds were excavated, some professionally, and others by local amateurs. It is likely that the dipper originated from a mound that had been excavated in an uncontrolled manner.

Curiously, a similar vessel was reported being found in the upper fill of another Illinois Hopewell mound, thirty miles to the south. High on a bluff above the Saline River, the Rutherford Mound was exca-

vated by the Illinois State Museum in 1954 (Fowler 1957). There, workers also found a marine shell dipper in the primary mound's upper fill, which is eerily similar to the Wilson specimen in form, style, and size, even though Carbon 14 analysis separates the sites by 500 years (Wilson - 100 B.C., Rutherford - 432 A.D.).

## References cited:

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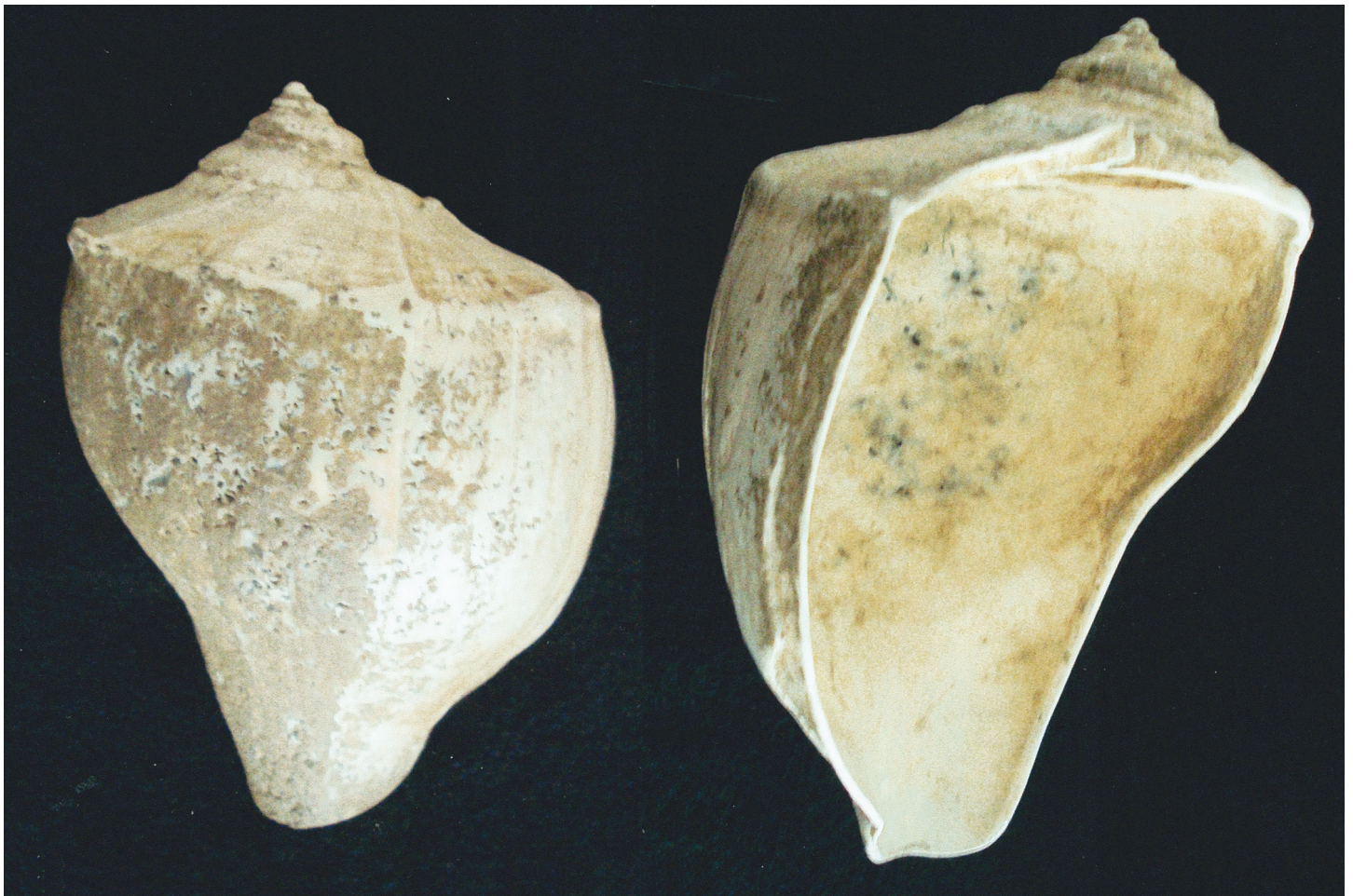


Figure 1 (Sutton) Hopewell shell dipper from Illinois.